



# Tennessee Department of Health INFANT MORTALITY FACT SHEET

## INFANT MORTALITY IN TENNESSEE

### ***What is infant mortality?***

The death of a live-born infant under one year of age. The infant mortality rate is the number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births.

### ***Tennessee Facts***

- In 2004, Tennessee's infant mortality rate was one of the worst in the nation, ranked 48<sup>th</sup> compared to other states.
- In 2004, Tennessee's infant mortality rate exceeded the provisional national rate of 6.6 by 30.3 percent.
- The infant mortality rate decreased to a ten-year low of 7.7 per 1,000 live births in 1999, but increased to 8.6 per 1,000 live births in 2004.
- In 2004, the black infant death rate (17.4 per 1,000 live births) was 2.7 times the rate for white babies (6.4 per 1,000 live births).

### ***Factors that lead to increased infant mortality risk***

#### ***Low birthweight babies***

- In 2004, low birthweight babies (less than 5 pounds 8 ounces) were over 21 times as likely to die in the first year as normal birthweight infants.
- The 2004 black low-weight birth percentage (14.5 percent) was 1.8 times the white percentage (8.2 percent).

#### ***Preterm births***

- In 2004, the infant death rate for premature babies was 44.7 per 1,000 live births, as compared to 3.0 per 1,000 live births for normal gestation babies.
- In 2004, the percentage of premature births for black mothers was 13.2%; for white mothers it was 9.9%.
- In 2004, black premature babies were more than twice as likely to die in infancy as white premature babies. For black premature babies the infant mortality rate was 78.8 per 1,000 live births versus 32.9 for white premature babies.

#### ***Lack of prenatal care***

- In 2004, infants born to women who waited until the 7th month or later to start prenatal care or who received no care were almost three times as likely to die as infants of women who started care in the first trimester.
- In 2004, black mothers were twice as likely as white mothers to receive inadequate or no prenatal care.

#### ***Mothers with less than a high school education***

- In 2004, mothers with less than a high school education were 1.7 times more likely to experience an infant death than those with more education.

#### ***Use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs***

- In 2004, the percent of white Tennessee mothers who reported smoking throughout pregnancy (17.5 percent) was over two times the percent reported for black mothers (8.0 percent).

#### ***Sudden Infant Death Syndrome***

- In 2004, 79 infants died from Sudden Death Syndrome (SIDS) in Tennessee.
- In 2004, the SIDS rate for white infants was 0.7 compared to the SIDS rate for black infants, which was 2.0.